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# The Pragmatic Evolution of America & the Role of the Intellectual

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THE PRAGMATIC EVOLUTION OF AMERICA AND THE  
ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the College of Humanities

Western Kentucky University

Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Michael D. Draper

November 1979



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THE PRAGMATIC EVOLUTION OF AMERICA AND THE  
ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL

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THE PRAGMATIC EVOLUTION OF AMERICA AND THE  
ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL

Michael D. Draper

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Directed by: Carlton Jackson, Ronald Nash

College of Humanities

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The intent of this thesis is to examine a portion of the thought and historical events which contributed to the development of the United States as a pragmatic nation, and the resulting influence upon its intellectual attitudes. The pragmatic evolution of America is a logical consequence, given the backgrounds and circumstances of those people who first settled this land. The founders of this country were, for the most part, members of the poor, working class who had grown up under governments adhering to strict caste societies and religious domination by their rulers. They held a common belief in a work ethic and a hope of material and religious improvement in the new land.

The vast natural resources and individual freedoms in America were conducive to personal expression and material opportunism, and the formal theology and rigid covenants marked by the Puritan era soon gave way to the westward expansion of a group of people with a sensual religious expression and an overwhelming zeal for material wealth. Their goals were a popular voice in government and the freedom to apply their strengths toward the improvement of their station in life. The formal religious services of a learned clergy were replaced by the camp meetings in the wilderness, conducted by unlearned, ordinary lay ministers.

Government by the educated, aristocratic few was likewise replaced by popular elections and the inspiration of men such as Andrew Jackson, who encouraged the ordinary, working man to seize the reigns of power in government and to maximize the opportunities for material success.



For most Americans, hard physical work was not only a necessity for survival, it was also the key to a multitude of material desires. Every aspect of American living centered around the practical, pragmatic desire for material success. Religion, science, education, and the arts were useful only in their application to the goal of material advancement.

The American bent toward utility was ominous for the intellectual. Viewed with distrust and suspicion, the intellectual was out of step with the mainstream of daily living. His lack of hunger for the material, his inherited wealth, and his appreciation and admiration of European arts seemed unnatural for those who struggled to own more material possessions, and for those who felt no need of European "decadence."

The American attitude towards intellectuals is not one of overt hostility, but rather an unfortunate by-product of our national character. Americans have had no time for leisurely pursuits, and the lack of appreciation of intellectuals stems from a nation given more to pragmatic endeavors than to pure intellectual occupations.

## INTRODUCTION

The United States is a pragmatic nation. We Americans are pragmatic not by chance, but through the evolution of our history, rooted in the heritage of Europe and developed on this continent. Today it permeates all facets of our lives--religion, business, government and philosophy.

My interest in this subject derives from coursework in Social and Intellectual History, and more particularly from Richard Hofstadter's, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life. In this work Mr. Hofstadter states that we Americans are an anti-intellectual people, and that intellectuals as a class have never received full acceptance in this country. The result of this alienation is a popular portrayal of any "intellectual" as effeminate, aloof, and inept at functioning in normal day-to-day affairs.

American intellectuals, however, have sometimes faced the dilemma of partial appreciation and acceptance of their expertise. They have often been asked to fill high-level positions in government and business; roles they view as attempts to compromise their principles.

Besides government, business presents a problem for the intellectual. To function within the system of American enterprise seems to prostitute his values; the intellectual, however, often finds himself dependent upon money furnished by the business sector.

With Hofstadter's work as a spring-board, I will examine why the American intellectual has not enjoyed the same appreciation as his European counterpart. This lack of appreciation necessarily results from our country's evolution into an essentially pragmatic nation. The events in England and on the Continent which led to the immigration and colonization of America brought people to this land who held strict religious principles, the value of a work



ethic, and a deep distrust of the wealthy, leisurely class. Freed from the caste societies in the homelands, Americans quickly recognized the religious and material potential of this country.

Always expanding westward, the settling of new frontiers left little idle time; family units were constantly uprooted and moved into uncharted areas. The religious practices established in the eastern seaboard cities were ill-suited in the wilderness, and there was seldom seen a minister of the gospel, much less an educated, ordained pastor. Education was gained in day-to-day living, supervised by parents, and the formal classroom was for most non-existent.

The westward dream fulfilled, Americans turned towards the formulation and organization of self-government, with emphasis upon the "natural man." This country sought its own individuality, and rejected its European past. Devoid of any philosophical school of thought, American Pragmatism developed as an expression of our lifestyle and value.

The emergence of industrialism and the rise of the big businessman solidified the pragmatic roots established through American settlement. Business was foremost in every facet of life, and again the intellectual found it difficult to function in an atmosphere dominated by pragmatics.

Religious crusaders of the era were no less pragmatic, with their emphasis upon numbers of souls saved as the primary proof of the effectiveness of their work. Religion employed the tactics of big business, and got the numbers they sought.

Education likewise experienced profound changes. Broad public educational opportunities presented parents the joy of well-educated children; yet the parents harbored the fear that, through their education, children would attain alien values. Educational achievement was sought, yet feared.

In conclusion, I will examine the modern day acceptance of intellectuals, and their position in a pragmatic America. Anti-intellectual movements such as McCarthyism verify that intellectuals are even today viewed with suspicion and distrust. A great deal



of this suspicion can perhaps be the result of the standards intellectuals have set for themselves, and their reluctance to compromise their position; yet anti-intellectualism in America is, I believe, primarily an unfortunate by-product of a nation given to hard work and utilitarian mores.

The average American has been reared to see the intellectual as synonymous with idleness and wealth, as somewhat less than moral. It is a carryover from our heritage, and has been fostered by the lives of each successive generation of Americans, from those who felt the compulsion to settle in this land to the present.

## EUROPEAN BACKGROUND

### Religious and Economic Contributions

To understand the evolution of America as a pragmatic nation, one must examine the causes of British and European immigration and colonization of the New World. The religious and economic stresses that emerged in Britain and Europe served as the two primary stimuli which induced millions of people to forego a lifetime of toil in the mother country, and opt for the uncertainty and loneliness of the American soil. This chapter will, therefore, explicate the religious and economic events which resulted in American immigration, and the plight of the immigrant who chose to seek a new beginning in colonial America.

Sixteenth century England exemplified the first significant movement away from the established Catholic church. Under the rule of King Henry VIII, the national church was Catholic in its form of worship and in its theology. Henry's son, Edward VI, however, began to institute Protestant changes in the Church. Latin was replaced as the official language, prayer books were published, and congregational singing was introduced.

The ascension of Queen Mary to the throne marked a return of Catholic dominance. Protestant persecutions were widespread, with over 300 Protestants being killed under her rule. Queen Elizabeth I, "Bloody Mary's" immediate successor, once again returned the Protestant element to official favor. Protestants who had fled under the persecuting hand of Mary now returned to England, bringing with them the more extreme Protestant notions found on the Continent. Had it not been for Queen Elizabeth's fondness for religious ceremony, the religious population of England in the mid 1500's could have divided, resulting in an even more pronounced Puritan element, greatly altering subsequent English and American developments.

Protestant domination continued in England into the seventeenth century, resulting in three distinct religious parties. The conserva-



tive element consisted of the established Roman Catholic Church, represented by the wealthy classes. It is to be noted that England did not experience the exodus of Catholics to as large a degree as did the more liberal religious elements. The primary reason why Catholics remained during years of Protestant appeal, times in which Catholics saw a decline in their numbers as well as religious persecution, was that the Catholics as a class were wealthy, established, landowners who entertained no thoughts of migration; England was their home, and the old established Church held them. Secondly, being of the wealthier class, they could escape the severity of legislation directed against them.

The second religious part was the Anglicans. The Anglican Church reflected the ceremony and theology of the ruling personage, and therefore represented a middle of the road approach to religion in England. Anglicans were characterized by their closeness to the government and the law.

The third and most significant group was the Puritan element, representing the liberal extreme faction of the English Reformation. The use of the word "Puritan" during the early 1600's entailed a much wider connotation than in later years. Here, it signified all extreme elements which advocated the "purification" of the existing English church. The term "Anabaptist" was likewise a generalization of all left wing elements of the Continental European Reformation.

Puritanism in this period was a movement to escape from formalism, grown from an aspiration towards increased spirituality. This tendency was embodied through opposition to clerical vestment, medieval ceremonies, making the sign of the cross during baptism, and keeping holy days.

Puritanism gradually began to reflect a division into a more conservative element and an extreme element, which came to be known as Separatism. Religious unrest among the three factions continued, particularly under the rule of King James, to the point that religious groups, the Puritans in particular, began to think of permanent relocation.



The persecution to this point had been confined largely to the Separatists. King James had said of the Puritan party within the Established Church at the Hampton Court Conference (1604): "I shall make them conform themselves or I will harry them out of the land, or else do worse." And in a letter to a friend he wrote that he had "peppered the Puritans soundly."<sup>1</sup>

The emergence of the Quakers also marked an important divergence from established English theology. Their founder, George Fox, became convinced through several years of spiritual searching that there was a direct illumination from God within every man's inner being. Since every man contained this direct illumination, the Quakers saw no need for priests--religion rests on man's inner being. They denied the Bible and the Church as the basis of religious authority, and were severely persecuted by all sects of English church leaders. Fox was brought before court magistrates sixty times, eight resulting in imprisonment. Quakers made themselves conspicuous by always wearing hats, refusing to take oaths of any kind, or to bear arms. By 1667 their converts included William Penn, son of Admiral Penn, who had received a land grant in America. Beginning around 1675, therefore, Quakers began to migrate to America.<sup>2</sup>

England was not the only country to experience migration of its inhabitants to America. French Huguenots fled France after the Edict of Nantes was revoked (1685). Persecuted by King Louis XIV for their refusal to convert to Catholicism, Huguenots were prohibited from leaving France because of their variety of industrial skills. French soldiers were assigned quarters in Huguenot homes; yet these people would escape in the dead of night with nothing but the clothes they wore. American colonists welcomed these immigrants, for they possessed skills much needed in the new world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William W. Sweet, The Story of Religion in America, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), pp. 13-20, and Religion in Colonial America, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), pp. 17-20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23, and Sweet op. cit., p. 25. <sup>3</sup>Sweet, op. cit., p. 36.

Much like the French Huguenots, the history of the German Palatines reflected the terror of King Louis XIV. By the beginning of the 18th century his devastation of the Rhine region had forced thousands from their homes, and many sought and found refuge in Protestant controlled England under Queen Anne. The solace was only temporary, however, as their presence in England proved to be a problem. Shortages of food, shelter and employment caused the British ministers of state to recall that the British province of New York needed manpower to develop its resources and to settle its lands. Thus, in 1708-1709 thousands of Palatines were placed aboard naval vessels bound for the new World. In America there was more than ample room, and the Palatines were put to work cutting trees and preparing supplies for the Queen's navy.<sup>4</sup>

One final nation which experienced a large scale immigration was Ireland. The first mass movement of the Irish from the homeland occurred in the mid-sixteen hundreds. Cromwell as the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland attempted, by whatever means necessary, to convert the country into an English Puritan settlement. The populations of three Irish provinces, Ulster, Munster and Leinster, were driven from their homes, and were shot on sight if they were seen again. Thousands fled or were forcibly sent to America. In 1649, one ship left Ireland with 170 Irish bound for America. In 1671, 1,000 left Bristol, England for New England. Between 1662-1655, 6,500 Irish came to America, and by 1660, 10,000 Irish were in the country. The majority of these settlers were from the former large land owning class, but by the end of the 1600's more businessmen, artisans and skilled workers were arriving.

The Woolens Act of 1699 also caused a large wave of immigration. This act severely limited the manufacturing and trade of Irish woolens, and came to represent an economic persecution by England that was unbearable to many Irish. This restriction of manufacturing,

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<sup>4</sup>Marcus L. Hansen, The Atlantic Migration: 1607-1860, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), pp. 46-47.



plus the religious grievance of paying tithes to support the Irish Established Church, added to the misery of recurring crop failures. By the middle of the 1700's the more than one half million Irish Presbyterians outnumbered other racial groups who came to America. They brought with them an intense hatred of despotic rule, especially by the English government. It has been estimated that at least 38% of the American Continental Army was Irish.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the great majority of those who settled America were from the poorer classes--small tradesmen, artisans, farmers, day laborers. These classes grew to hate and resent the select wealthy, and they magnified their own qualities of sobriety, diligence and thrift.

These attitudes were religiously expressed in Puritanism and Calvinism. Emphasizing the economic virtue of the work habit, they found concrete expression in Pragmatism.<sup>6</sup>

The immigrant, therefore, brought a religious, economic and material history with him to America. Once settled in the new country, these forces melded to form the basis of what emerged as a pragmatic people--pragmatic religiously and economically in the virtue of honest, hard work; and pragmatic materially by necessity.

It will become increasingly evident that the immigrant could have developed no other way. His European background combined with the rigors of taming his new home left no room for idle speculation; the new American was pragmatic in all respects.

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<sup>5</sup> Francis J. Brown and Joseph S. Roucek (eds.), One America, (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1945), pp. 35-46, and Sweet, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Paths To The Present, (New York: The McMillan Co., 1949), pp. 4-8.



### Role of the Immigrant

It became increasingly evident also that those millions who chose to begin life anew in America were the poorer classes who gradually came to realize that they possessed no reasonable opportunity to better their conditions in their present surroundings. These people were rudely awakened in several ways. The religious upheavals that tormented unorthodox practices has already been referred to: However, these people found radical events in other facets of their daily existence. The European continent in particular experienced an unprecedented population boom of such proportions that the common folk found themselves forced to draw a livelihood from less land than they had been accustomed. The close communal traditions which had been in force for centuries were replaced by many governments with an individual ownership system. This abolished many pasture lands on which the peasant depended to feed his livestock. Former marshlands and wooded areas, which once were the common property of all, were now allotted to individuals. This new practice, combined with a steady movement towards the industrial centers, caused an increased demand for food--a demand which the farmer was expected to meet.

Less land was expected to produce more, and the increased population forced more family units to share the family plot. More and more the peasant came to rely upon the cheapest of foods--the potato.

Men found it increasingly necessary to venture away from the family holdings to search for additional work. Many young began to drift from village to village to work at various menial tasks, while those who remained at home became more aware of the futility of their efforts.

The village system, which had once been a very close knit communal life, began to be replaced by an impersonal day to day struggle which seemed alien to the peasant. What had once been a routine pattern of living had been transformed into a life of

increasing demands, with less means of satisfying those demands. Increasing numbers of laborers began to consider America as a viable alternative to their present state. Although family ties were strong and traditional roots were deeply entrenched, more and more people realized that the traditional village mode of living was no longer possible in their country.

With collapse of village life, and its intimate relations, came the need to make decisions on an individual basis. Once one could discuss common problems with fellow villagers, but now the burden lay on each individual to shape his own future.

The choice of immigration likewise became a selection of the individual. Though immigration to America was a movement of mass proportions, the ultimate decision was made on an individual basis, with each individual weighing his own unique circumstance. The variety of hardships which befell these people was felt by many; yet the election to uproot their lives and strike out again could only be the choice of the individual.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted, (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, Little, Brown & Co., 1973). Handlin's forceful book provides an informative account of the forces which influenced American immigration, as well as their lives in America. His work provides much of the information expressed in this section.



## COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT

It is now apparent that the majority of the people who colonized the new America were not of the upper stratum of European society; rather they were the rejected, the radicals, the poor, the "disinherited." Their reasons for migration were many, but most came because of religious or economic persecution, and their common bond was the anticipation of a new life, coupled with a rejection of their former circumstances. The complete severance of old world ties, the long and arduous voyage to America, and the primitive living conditions in this country exacted a heavy toll upon the moral roots of the immigrants. As Horace Bushnell recorded in 1847:

Transplanted to a new field, the emigrant race lose, of necessity, a considerable portion of that vital force which is the organic and conserving power of society. All the old roots of local love and historic feeling--the joints and bands which minister nourishment--are left behind.<sup>1</sup>

It is not suprising then that of the one hundred and one colonists who came over in the Mayflower, only an even dozen constituted the membership in the first church.<sup>2</sup> Yet we know that in the early years of American colonization a religious strictness and formality existed among at least a portion of the colonists that held them in close communion with two and three generations. This chapter will examine the conditions which fostered the establishment of these first churches, with their stringent moral codes of conduct and tightly knit covenants, as well as the events which led to the disintegration of those same covenants and the rapid exploration of and expansion westward to the wilderness of America.

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<sup>1</sup>William W. Sweet, Revivalism in America, (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14.



Foremost among the pre-Revolutionary War churches in America were the Puritans who, despite the evils of a transplanted society, established a rigid moral code and intricate communal life which far surpassed any other of its day. Central to the Puritan ideology was the belief in a divine mission in coming to America, resulting in a special commission from God to establish a Zion in the wilderness, a commonwealth whose foundation and purpose was Christian.<sup>3</sup>

According to John Winthrop, the Puritans in America were to be as "a City upon a Hill"--a moral example to all the world. Winthrop believed that the foundation for this goal had already been laid in Europe and England, but had been frustrated there.

It was this divine commission from God which led the Puritans to settle the new land; in fact, they saw their move as inevitable. God's will was to be accomplished in America. His people had been afforded a new beginning, with a new environment in which to achieve His plan.

The Puritan colony was established on a series of covenants, beginning with the basic and essential covenant between a man and God to the covenants of the family, church, and state. Puritan law discouraged the primacy or independence of the individual, whether in theological, political, social or economic matters. Colony regulations made it illegal for an individual to live alone, everyone had to be a member of a household or family unit. As Winthrop stated:

No man in society must be allowed the kind of natural liberty which is common to man with beasts and other creatures.

Puritan doctrine also fostered the conviction that some men were better than others--more pious, more moral and wise. From their religious belief in the elect (those men predetermined by

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<sup>3</sup>Loren Baritz, City on a Hill, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 13.

God for salvation), to their political bias of government by a select few, for many years they succeeded in stifling any inclination toward democracy. Common man was essentially unfit for self-government, and there was a baseness in his relationship to his God.<sup>4</sup>

For the Puritan, man's connection with God was through an intermediary--the formally trained, learned clergy. "In the midst of the forest and frontier conditions, the Puritans maintained schools, colleges, a standard of scholarship and of competent writing, a class of men devoted entirely to the life of the mind and of the soul."<sup>5</sup>

Such were the Puritan clergy, men well trained to administer to the religious requirements of their congregations. They had the benefit of the best education, and they devoted long hours towards religious study. They commanded an unprecedented reverence and respect and they were the necessary link between the Puritan and his God. Personal sacrifices were made by all to insure the colony of a learned clergy, and it was considered a privilege to sit through a four or five hour sermon delivered by such men.

Their discourses reflected the rationalism of Descartes, the belief in the innate, intuitive knowledge of truths by which the world should be governed; natural training for the Puritan minister was not enough.<sup>6</sup> The Puritan mind was committed to abstraction, and fearful of personification. They rejected any attempt to personify Christ, the mother image of Mary was minimized.<sup>7</sup>

The scope of the Puritan educational system was not, however, limited to the clergy:

The founding fathers of colonial education saw no difference between the basic education appropriate for

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-30.

<sup>5</sup>Perry Miller & Thomas H. Johnson, The Puritans, (New York: American Book Co., 1938), p. 12. <sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.

<sup>7</sup>Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), pp. 88-89.



a cleric and that appropriate for any other liberally educated man. They felt the need of learned ministers more acutely than learned men in other professions, but they intended their ministers to be educated side by side and in the same liberal curriculum with other civic leaders and men of affairs. Among the first generations of American Puritans, men of learning were both numerous and honored. There was about one university-trained scholar. . .to every forty or fifty families.<sup>8</sup>

As the colonies became more settled and more complex, the make-up of the Puritan became diversified. The founding fathers gradually died out, and the second and third generations expanded geographically. By the end of the seventeenth century a young group of clergymen emerged who were representatively more liberal in their theological outlook, while the older, more established clergy still held to the hard orthodox beliefs of their founders.

Puritanism was founded on a delicate balance between intellect and emotion,<sup>9</sup> and the rise of the young, liberally minded clergy placed this balance in a precarious position. America had progressed to such an extent that the sights of many were set towards material rather than spiritual goals. The immigrants of the latter seventeenth century were primarily Germans and Scotch-Irish, and they were generally more poverty-stricken than their English predecessors. Upon arriving in America, they often became indentured servants and were scattered widely throughout the country. These people tended to live in small, isolated communities, with a noticable lack of strict religious leadership. Their primary objective in this land was material, not religious, and as a result a great majority of these people were wholly unchurched.<sup>10</sup>

The problems of the Puritans became increasingly complex. As the material abundance of this new land became more apparent, the common Puritan found himself less satisfied with the original

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism In American Life, (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 62-64.

<sup>10</sup> Sweet, op. cit., pp. 18-19.



orthodox tenets. The concept of God as impersonal and reachable only through an intermediary became increasingly more difficult to accept. The younger Puritan clergy began to tolerate groups such as Baptists and Quakers, and the long, dull sermons of the clergy were attended by fewer people.

This degeneration from the fundamental Puritan teachings prompted Increase Mather in 1702 to exclaim:

We are the posterity of the good old Puritan non-conformists in England, who were a strict and holy people. Such were our fathers who followed the Lord into this wilderness. Oh, New England, New England, look to it that the glory be not removed from thee, for it begins to go. Oh, degenerate, New England, what art thou come to at this day! How are those sins become common in thee that once were not so much as heard of in this land.<sup>11</sup>

Hofstadter's recent remarks indicate the essential problem:

By the 1730's and 1740's the churches of New England . . . had lost much of their pristine morale and had settled into dull repositories of the correct faith of the established classes. Abstract and highly intellectual in their traditions, they had lost the power to grip simple people; the Reformation controversies out of which the doctrinal commitments of these churches had grown had lost much of their meaning. The zealots of the first Puritan generation and their well-schooled sons had long since gone to their graves. The ministers themselves had lost much of the drive, and therefore the prestige, of their earlier days. Their sermons attended by sleepy congregations, were often dull and abstruse exercises in old dogmatic controversies.<sup>12</sup>

America now was truly a nation of simple people. Expansion into previously unexplored areas of the new land was on the rise, men became more mobile and restless. No longer was the population held to a limited geographical confine, men were constantly picking up stakes and moving westward. The inability of the highly formal, rigidly controlled churches of New England to deal with this expanding land was the prime reason the vast majority of 18th century Americans were unchurched. The old covenants established by the

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<sup>11</sup> Gilbert Seldes, The Stammering Century, (New York: The John Day Co., 1928), p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 65.

first Puritans were no longer applicable to the lives of the masses. Americans lived rugged, simple lives completely void of formal learning and an equally formal religion.

The crises faced by the Puritans of this age equally applied to other established, New England religious groups, most notably the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians. Like the Puritans, these two bodies were originally comprised of almost one hundred percent college trained ministers. Their formal services and rational discourses were likewise geared to a passive audience. Much like the Puritans, the Congregationalists and Presbyterians were unable to adjust to the rapid expansion of the southern and western outposts of the colonists. Their clergies were untrained and ill equipped to journey beyond New England to minister to those living in settlements and rude dwellings. The American Anglican church equally faced a loss of prestige and control. Their rigidity and disdain for emotionalism in the church confined their effectiveness to the New England colonies.

A series of events as early as 1657 show the rise of emotionalism in American religion, and the beginning of what was to be known as the Great Awakening.

As the strictness of orthodox Puritan doctrine was questioned more and more, the latter Puritans began to lean towards Congregationalism. The Half-Way Covenant (granted synod approval in 1662) asserted that persons who had been baptised but who had not had "an adequate religious experience" could apply formally for full church membership and could be admitted into the church as "half-way members." Under this provision, they would be allowed to present their children for baptism, but they were not considered saints, and they were not to partake of the Lord's Supper. (Original Puritan law distinguished the "saint" as one who had experienced a profound religious transformation and was destined to heaven).

Soloman Stoddard carried this one step further. In his church of Northampton, Connecticut he rejected even the Half-Way Covenant, and openly admitted everyone to his church. He also began a movement to combine the churches in his area into a regional association--



clearly based upon a Presbyterian model. This association was to have the power to choose ministers and to supervise their conduct.<sup>13</sup>

The Great Awakenings began in 1720 in New Jersey, when members of the Dutch Reformed Church were aroused by the stirring sermons of their young pastor, Theodore Frelinghuysen, who had come to America inspired by English and Dutch Puritanism. Frelinghuysen set the tone of the Great Awakenings in the preface of his published sermons when he stated:

He (the author) is not ignorant how classic is the present age, and his is not writing for the learned, but for the plain, and the unlettered. It shall suffice him if he express himself according to the style of the Holy Spirit, in a clear and simple manner, and so that he can be understood by all.

Frelinghuysen's New Jersey revival led to a second among the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of the Middle Colonies. One of their midst, William Tennent, established in 1726 his "Log College Group" at Neshaminy, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. There for the next twenty years he trained young men to carry the revivalist spirit to the Presbyterians. His son, Gilbert Tennent, was soon recognized as the principal Presbyterian revivalist.

In 1734 and 1735 Jonathan Edwards once again stirred the emotions of the people of Northampton, Connecticut, with his zealous revivalistic sermons. Edwards, Solomon Stoddards' grandson and personal choice as his successor, began a wide emotional appeal based upon a unique combination of the old Puritan doctrines and their custom of the written sermon, with the passion and religious zeal of other revivalists. Edwards stood almost alone in a position midway between the old intellectualism, formality, and piety of New England and the evangelical tub-thumpers of that period, such as George Whitefield.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Baritz, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>14</sup>Sweet, op. cit., pp. 51-53 and Hofstadter, op. cit., pp. 64-64.



Jonathan Edwards, a Yale graduate, introduced America to a unique combination of Calvinist precepts with a personal emphasis which gave an emotional appeal to his preaching. He refuted the notions that only the ignorant and uneducated ministers were advocates of revivalism, and that only the emotionally unstable stressed the significance of feeling in religion.<sup>15</sup>

A more detailed examination of his tenets is in order because history has laid at his doorstep the subsequent development of the revivalistic movement in America. His central theme was that religion was a personal matter, that it is an "inner experience or it is nothing."

Through personal introspection, Edwards asserted the position which, at least in theory, was to become the basis of all later Protestantism, no matter what the denominational name placed upon it; namely that religion had to do with God and man--with no intermediaries, no formalism, and no extenuations. Personal introspection was necessary to find true grace. He insisted that his congregations strip themselves of convention and pure conditioned responses. He demanded self-knowledge of a people who had formally known only rituals and established formulas.

He taught that the former Puritan theory of covenants was a delusion, that God was an angry God "without any promise." God was unlimited in power and vengeance, and He was fully capable of crushing sinners for their wrongdoings or damning them to eternal torture. He took the imagery and illusions of his sermons from the ordinary, daily experiences of the New England farmer. Edwards attempted to present the meaning of hell to the senses of his audience; his desire was to use his words in a way that would actually force those hearing his voice to sense hell, to smell the sulfur and feel the fire.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Sweet, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>16</sup> Baritz. op. cit., pp. 65-69.

In 1741, at Enfield, Edwards delivered his best known (however not most representative) sermon, Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God. This sermon, referred to by Baritz as "the perfect expression of the revivalistic sermon," was meant by Edwards to fulfill those precepts he had learned from the British Empiricist John Locke: that ideas are formed through the senses, that only through experience can knowledge grow. Upon reading Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Edwards' commented that its pages gave him a greater pleasure "than the most greedy miser finds, when gathering up handfuls of silver and gold, from some newly discovered treasure."<sup>17</sup> Edwards thoroughly digested Locke's epistemology and applied it to his purpose of delivering effective and "sensible" sermons. He accepted Locke's teaching that God does not impart ideas or obligations outside sense experience and that there was an unbroken connection between experience and behavior. Edwards realized that men have to deal with things, not as they lie in the divine mind of God but directly through day to day existence. This required an active mind, one that was receptive to the imprints made upon it by God and was capable of applying these impressions to earthly life, not just reflecting without thinking about what has been received by the mind. As Paul Miller states:

God works through the concrete and the specific, he (Edwards) learned from Locke that men have to deal with things, not things as they lie in the divine mind,<sup>18</sup> but simply as they are registered on the human brain.

Edwards' Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God is atypical of much of his other work, yet it remains the outstanding example of his revivalistic teachings. His general behavior during the period of our history known as the Great Awakening was marked by a highly refined and rationalistic philosophy of emotional religion.

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<sup>17</sup>J. L. Blau, Men and Movements in American Philosophy, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1952), p. 57.

<sup>18</sup>Paul Miller, "Jonathan Edwards: The First Modern American," from Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment, edited by John Opie, (Lexington, Mass. Heath, 1969), pp. 24-27.



It has been said that Edwards was born in the intellectual and emotional desert of colonial America, and Edwards himself gradually came to believe that the greatest threat to conversion lay in the passionate enthusiasm of his followers. The intent of his theology was not to induce the bellowing, howling, and emotional whines of his church members; he rather meant to bring a direct relationship of man to God through daily empirical understanding. But by making salvation the single end of man, by insisting that it was wholly God's work, and at the same time accepting the physical signs of personal communication with the Holy Spirit, Edwards broke down the wall surrounding the ministry. He failed to foresee that his doctrine of direct communication between man and God was certain to cause the breakdown of the whole authority of the church and eventually make each man the individual judge of his own salvation. This doctrine was a necessary part of his theological framework, but he opened the way for others less austere than himself.<sup>19</sup> As Baritz states:

By providing later tub-thumping revivalists with a model of the perfect revivalistic sermon, Edwards did permanent damage to the future social history of America. Though he cannot be held directly responsible for the excesses of his followers, for the mindless reiteration of the themes he formulated, still he was the exemplar. The hordes of bombastic revivalists who cawed their way well into the nineteenth century walked a path that led directly back to Edwards' door.<sup>20</sup>

Jonathan Edwards' emphasis upon the individual's relationship to his God coincided with a period in this country's evolution of new found freedoms--not only religious, but economic, political and social freedoms as well. The close of the Revolutionary War signaled a freedom from the bonds of the mother country, and the impositions and limitations upon the colonists. America was now a nation in its own right, and its people were quick to assert their

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<sup>19</sup>Seldes, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

autonomy and strong character. Customs were no longer patterned after established European molds, new methods of living were tried, tested and adopted. The rejection of anything which smacked of being European became predominant. The old established caste system was overthrown in favor of a basic equality of white men. European economic limitations were replaced by a system of free enterprise whereby the common man, through ingenuity and hard work, could make his own fortune. The previous religious stratifications in which a man was born into a religion, raised in that faith, and lived an unquestioning religious life no longer held in this land. Men were now free to seek the religion of their choosing, and that choice for a great many Americans brought about the emergence of religious denominationalism in this country.

The American man emerged as a man given to hard work and simple living, with the constant goal of making his own way in the face of the constant hardships and setbacks of wilderness life. Families moved by the thousands into previously unsettled areas, clearing small plots in the forest, erecting crude log cabins, killing wild game for food, and raising enough corn to see them through the next winter. This American was a loner in many respects--over and over authors record that the wilderness family would settle an area, erect a cabin, and clear enough land to raise crops. When hearing the gunshot of a stranger the pioneer families would then abandon their houses and lands, and strike out anew for another unsettled area, where the process would begin again. Conservation of land and resources was unknown, trees were for cutting down and building cabins, wild game was for food. There was always more land to the west, and these men were quick to find it.

Moving with such swiftness, men quickly outdistanced the organized colonial life. As Hofstadter notes:

As the people moved westward after the Revolution, they were forever outrunning the institutions of settled society; it was impossible for institutions to move as fast or as constantly as the population. Organizations dissolved; restraints disappeared. Churches, social bonds, and cultural institutions often broke down, and they could not be reconstituted before the frontier



families made yet another leap into the wilderness or the prairie.<sup>21</sup>

The years immediately following the American War for Independence marks the decline of authority for the institutionalized, formalistic churches. Based primarily in New England and grounded in the structures of the European past, the Puritans, Congregationalists and Presbyterians could no longer minister to the needs of an expanding country. Americans living a frontier life had no use for formal religious services, nor the learned clergy who delivered them. Their foremost and primary goal was no longer their relationship to God; theological concerns were replaced by a driving material ambition. Men were now free to seek the wealth that this land offered, and they had no time for dull, uninteresting sermons.

The established orthodox churches, by virtue of their settled, learned clergy, were unable or unwilling to venture into the frontier expanses. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists made modest attempts to reach the frontier border settlers, but the religion they brought with them was not applicable to the life they led. It is no wonder that during this period the religious and moral conditions of the country reached a new low at precisely the time of the greatest expansion westward. There was unanimous testimony from leaders of all religious bodies that a rising tide of iniquities was sweeping the land, and that religion was generally in a "low and declining state."<sup>22</sup>

What was needed then was a religion sensitive to the common man. Clearly it was not the religions of the pre-Revolution era, but one which could appeal to the simple, hard-working man. This need was answered by a group of religious pietists introduced in America by the Germans, developed there in the left-wing movements of groups such as the Mennonites, Moravians and Dunkers. The English

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<sup>21</sup>Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>22</sup>William W. Sweet, Religion In the Development of American Culture: 1765-1840, (Gloucester, Mass.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 53.

Baptists, Quakers and later Methodists thoroughly adopted pietism, with its stress upon inner religion and the emotional response, with emphasis upon individual responsibility<sup>23</sup> (incorporating the theology of Edwards).

These old world "sects" were despised by the established churches, and oppressed by state authorities. However, they expanded late in the eighteenth century. The proponents of pietism were a breed of men different from the clergymen of the Puritans, Congregationalists and Presbyterians of colonial years.

American Baptists and Methodists were the principal religious bodies which responded to the challenge of saving the souls of a fallen America. Grounded in the teachings of Edwards, these revivalists used his theology as a springboard into a religion primarily based upon emotional appeal and a disdain for formal learning.

The contrasts of the later revivalists and evangelists with earlier clergy are striking, and afford an understanding of the times. The revivalists, unlike early clergymen, felt no need to address themselves to the reason of their audiences, or questions of religious doctrine. For the most part, they dispensed with written sermons, instead resorting to direct communication with their listeners. As Edwards before them, they appealed to the sensible responses of their congregations--eliciting their shrieks, fits, seizures, groans and grovelings. They preached that not learning but the spirit was important to salvation, and that ordinary laymen had the capacity to carry on the work of conversion.

Orthodox clergymen responded with alarm at the boldness of the revivalists claims. Charles Chauncy, in his Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England (1743), shows his outrage at the insolence of men totally unqualified to challenge the ministry. The revivals had opened the door, he complained, to lay exhorters:

Men of all occupations who are vain enough to think themselves fit to be Teachers of others: Men who, though they have no Learning, and but small Capacities, yet imagine

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<sup>23</sup>Sweet, Revivalism in America, op. cit., pp. 24-25.



they are able, and without Study too, to speak to the spiritual Profit of such as are willing to hear them.<sup>24</sup>

Chauncy's writing accurately reflects the dilemma placed on American religion by the rise of Protestant revivalists, with their contention that there was no need of learning in preaching, that their ministry could do more by the spirit than could the minister by his learning. These revivalists in effect set learning against the spirit as opposites, and presented the two to the eighteenth century American for a choice. What was needed, felt the revivalists, was a return to the basic conditions of primitive Christianity, to which the Scriptures alone would give the key. No amount of formal learning could reveal the basic emotional response of man to his God. Man must break with past religious practices, and seek not to preserve outdated forms but to strike out anew in order to recapture the spiritual purity which was revealed only in the Scriptures. As Albert Barnes stated:

This is an age of freedom and men will be free. The religion of forms is the stereotyped wisdom or folly of the past, and does not adapt itself to the free movements, the enlarged views, the varying plans of this age.<sup>25</sup>

Intellectual understanding of religion for the revivalist is therefore subordinated to practical objectives. As Sidney Mead notes:

Around 1800 evangelical Protestantism parted company with the intellectual currents of the modern world. Protestants defined "religion," while the latter defined "intelligence." Since Americans have been given the hard choice between being intelligent according to the standards prevailing in their intellectual centers, and being religious according to the standards prevailing in their denominations.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Hofstadter, op. cit., pp. 67-70.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-83.

<sup>26</sup>Sidney E. Mead, "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America," Church History, Vol. XXIII, (Dec. 1954), p. 311.

There is a second reason why the value of intelligence was minimized during this period. As previously mentioned, America was now a nation chiefly concerned with material success rather than spiritual happiness, and material wealth could only be achieved by hard work. In the old world physical labor was demeaning; in this land, it was the price of community acceptance. The Bible even vaunted the virtues of toil--"Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening"--thus the pioneer had the further incentive of divine sanction. Benjamin Franklin had warned prospective settlers in this land "People do not inquire concerning a Stranger, what is he?, but what can he do?"

In the 1830's the French engineer, Chevalier remarked:

He (the American's) single means (of satisfaction) and his single thought is the domination of the material world--industry in its divers branches, business, speculation, action, work.

Every aspect of life was tailored towards this single enterprise. As Gilbert Seldes remarks:

The American cannot imagine himself without a job. And the Yankee does not even suspect the existence of that variety of the human species which is known as "a man of leisure." The American system of government, the independence and individualism which are the essence of Protestantism, are favorable to business enterprise, to inventiveness, to movement, and to work;<sup>27</sup> the four great characteristics of the American.

"A man of leisure" was indeed foreign to frontier existence, with its daily demands upon its citizens. A man of leisure was for the average American working man synonymous with the man of education, and most men had little time for either. As Arthur Schlesinger has noted, the American farmer made a religion of work, and the result was a general disdain of the wealthy, educated, leisurely classes. The pressing concerns for the farmer were with the practical and the utilitarian, and these concerns made him indifferent if not hostile to the life of the mind. "Intellectual activity for its own sake, though allowable perhaps for idle towns-

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<sup>27</sup> Seldes, op. cit., p. 38.



folk, had no place in his scheme of things. The doer, not the thinker, achieved results in the world as he knew it, anything else was a form of malingering."

It was precisely with these arguments that the Baptist farmer-preachers and Methodist circuit-riding evangelists made great efforts toward reviving the religious emotions of this westward moving nation. The men who delivered the message of God to the outposts of American life were not men of formal learning--they were common, uneducated laymen. The Baptist "farmer-preacher" often held a full-time job during the week, while preaching the gospel in his community and surrounding ones on weekends. Their license to lead the religious life of their fellow men was not a diploma or degree, but their "call" to preach the gospel, and this divine calling precluded any need for an education in any other book but the Bible. As Charles G. Finney expressed: "the schools are to a great extent spoiling the ministers. College students would spend four years. . . at classical studies and no God in them."<sup>28</sup>

Education was not the proper avenue to learn how to win the souls of men; this could only be achieved by doing, by practice. Hence the evangelists placed great emphasis upon tangible results--the number of converts won over to God. Pragmatic results were the success of the evangelist. Again Hofstadter notes:

Long before pragmatism became a philosophical creed, it was formulated, albeit in a crude way, by the evangelists. For the layman the pragmatic test in religion was the experience of conversion; for the clergyman it was the ability to induce this experience. The ministers' success in winning souls was taken<sup>29</sup> as the decisive evidence that he preached the truth.

Soul winning could only be accomplished in one way, by reaching the people--wherever they might be. This was done in remark-

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<sup>28</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Birth of a Nation, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 35-39.

<sup>29</sup> Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 85.

able fashion by the Methodists, and in lesser degree by the Baptists. Ill-paid and overworked, these men journeyed over treacherous miles and often fierce weather to bring their message to anyone who would listen. The Methodists especially prided themselves in this fact, and their efforts paid off with such success that their ranks grew from 3,000 members in 1775 to the largest Protestant denomination of over one and one-half million members eighty years later.<sup>30</sup>

The Baptists and Methodists stringently rejected attempts to centralize their methods of conversion. In tune with the voice of other countrymen, they resisted authoritative regulations and tight controls. They held services in homes, in barns, in fields--wherever they attracted audiences. Their emphasis was individualistic, they presented religion as a personal matter, outwardly expressed by a deep emotional involvement in the services themselves.

Both the Baptist and Methodists incorporated the widespread use of camp-meetings to further their goals. Held in open fields, families would often journey several days to attend such meetings. It was at these gatherings that the evangelical speaker was at his peak in soliciting the shrieks, groans and hysteria that accompanied this type of religion. The evangelist used all means at his disposal to effect the emotional responses of his listeners. Where Edwards had feared such emotional outbursts, now these responses were taken as proof of salvation. At the height of such services it was not uncommon to see men, women and children of all ages in fits--trembling, shouting, rolling about on the ground uncontrollably. Ministers recorded these happenings at their meetings with pride, boasting of the large numbers they had saved from the evil clutches of the Devil.

These roving evangelistic camp-meetings had an adverse effect upon the local ministers, as they were inevitably judged by their ability to create the proper setting and build-up for the periodic

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 97.



revival campaigns held in their areas. They were often compared with the more colorful evangelists, and congregations yearned for a forceful revivalist to "revive us again,"<sup>31</sup>

There are two primary by-products of the growth of denominational revivalism that must be reiterated--first, that revivalism fostered an anti-intellectual bias in American Protestantism, and secondly, it widely rejected our European past.

As previously noted, denominationalism set learning against religion. The wide appeal of uneducated lay preachers with their primary emphasis upon a personal religious experience and tangible numerical results left little room for the traditional role of the Church and its ministers in intellectual leadership.<sup>32</sup> Few Americans had time for intellectual pursuits, and their religion convinced them that not only was education an unnecessary part of their lives, but that it was also a definite hindrance to their religion. The result was a setback for American intellectualism, portraying all intellectuals as the idle wealthy--a class not involved in the mainstream of this country's development. This idea was especially detrimental because those who had wealth enough to allow them time for intellectual interests were despised by all others who led simple, rugged lives. The common man's disdain for the wealthy was fueled by the revivalistic declarations of a religion without reason. Simple, hard physical work was a virtue, the key to religious and material success, and the intellectual did not fit into the American scheme of life. Material wealth did not hold the lustre for the intellectual that it did for the working man, and to the average American obsessed with worldly goals, this was incomprehensible.

Intellectualism suffered also from America's rejection of its past. Rather than attempting to adopt the best of previous cultural achievements, Americans declared the past useless in charting the future. Past history was rejected as irrelevant

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<sup>31</sup>Mead, op. cit., p. 310 and Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

primarily because of the types of people this country attracted, people who had known only suffering, persecution and hardships in the old countries, and saw nothing in their former lives that was applicable in America. Novel methods of existence were tried, tested and adopted, and they were unique to this land, not incorporated from old world methods. Once this nation gained independence from British control, the people were determined to make it on their own, to be self-reliant and totally independent of outside influence.

Intellectual achievements again suffered the loss, as Americans denied themselves the opportunity of outside expertise. The result was the notable absence for many years of prominent artists, authors, and thinkers who were distinctively American.

Our government also felt the influences of the equalitarian forces. Whereas in earlier times men of intellectual distinction held the reigns of government, now they were characterized as too European to hold office. The common man again was brought to the forefront, a man identified with the majority of citizens. This trend became more apparent in the later Jacksonian years, but was grounded in the events of the late eighteenth century.

The foundation was thus laid for the subsequent development of America as a pragmatic nation, growing in geography, population and wealth. Material goals replaced religious principles, and America rapidly became a dominant force in world affairs.



## THE AGE OF JACKSON

That period in America's history generally known as The Jacksonian Era was the time when the influence of the common man permeated the political, social, religious and educational development of this nation. The events of our nation from its inception find vivid expression in the rise of technology, scientific advances, and America's fervent belief in progress.

Andrew Jackson played a vital role in this development, for in him the average, working American saw concrete hope of his own values and aspirations. Jackson was not the sole creator of all that took place during his term as President; credit or blame cannot be given to him alone for this country's progress or mistakes--yet he remains the best example of what America valued during this era, and is associated with what can be called the triumph of democracy.

Democracy was gaining momentum by the age of Jackson. Colonial Americans espoused much of the basis of Jacksonian democracy, especially Jefferson. Jeffersonian democracy had been limited by the liberal individualist tenets of the eighteenth century. The ideal society was one of small independent farmers plus an intellectual planter aristocracy. Such a democratic system had no room for a population of urban masses or the rise of manufacturing and industry.<sup>1</sup> As Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. has pointed out, the Jacksonians:

moderated that side of Jeffersonianism which talked of agricultural virtue, independent proprietors, 'natural' property, abolition of industrialism, and expanded immensely that side which talked of economic equality, the laboring classes, human rights and the control of industrialism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr. The American Democratic Tradition: A History, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963), pp. 74-75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

The America of the early 1800's was characterized by the rise of urban living, improved means of transportation, westward expansion, and even greater aspirations toward the possession of material wealth than had previously been experienced. Americans classified as city dwellers grew from about 6 percent in 1800 to approximately 20 percent in 1860. In conjunction with this rapid urbanization, the number of persons engaged in manufacturing increased 127 percent between 1820 and 1840, while agricultural labor increased only 79 percent.<sup>3</sup>

America continued its westward expansion, exploration and settlement fully to the Pacific Ocean, and carried with it the popular feeling of nationalism. Many years before, John Winthrop had called this nation a "Citty on A Hill," destined by nature and by God to be as a shining example of all mankind as well as to ourselves. Manifest Destiny, a phrase first used by the editor of a Democratic magazine, became a popular slogan which assumed the United States to be an oceanbound republic, carrying American freedom and democracy to all the inhabitants of the North American Continent.<sup>4</sup> Americans felt compelled to achieve, to excel, to be greater than any other people had been.

Coupled with this desire to achieve was an equal frustration of the working class, who felt the central government to be hostile to their needs and interests. Americans felt a betrayal of the Jeffersonian promise of equal rights in favor of special benefits for a single class. Men such as Alexander Hamilton reflected the political philosophy that accompanied the new industrialism with his belief in the essential wisdom of the wealthy class, along with a deep skepticism as to the capacity of the masses for self-government:

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<sup>3</sup>Douglas T. Miller (ed.), The Nature of Jacksonian America, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1972), p. 11 and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1948), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Ekirch, op. cit., p. 100.



All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are rich and well-born, the other the mass of the people. . . . The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right.<sup>5</sup>

Hamilton's proposals, though preceding the events of the time, parallel the general goals of the established aristocracy and business beliefs of the Jacksonian era. Social stability, he believed, rested on the firm alliance of government and business. His plans called for "the immediate interest of the moneyed men to co-operate with government in its support." He felt that society would be governed best by an aristocracy, and that aristocracy was based most properly on the ownership of property.

Daniel Webster voiced similar beliefs when he declared that "power naturally and necessarily follows property." The crucial battle, then, concerned the extension of the vote to the vast masses of Americans who were propertyless.

Jeremiah Mason reflected the same feelings when he wrote:

As the wealth of the commercial and manufacturing classes increases, in the same degree ought their political power to increase.<sup>6</sup>

Concentrated wealth was further justified by expounding the virtues of inequality among men. In 1834 Peter Oxenbridge Thatcher, a Boston judge stated in a charge to a grand jury that:

The diversity of property and riches is the order of Providence. . . . Why are not all the flowers of the field equally beautiful and fragrant? Why are not all the fruits of the earth equally rich and wholesome? And why towers the oak in grandeur to heaven, while the shrub at its base is trodden under feet? Will vain regrets,<sup>7</sup> and still vainer discontent change the course of nature?

The average working American of this age was not content to remain a lowly shrub overshadowed and stifled by the towering oak. Popular suffrage was broadened throughout the nation, giving ordinary

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<sup>5</sup>Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-13.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

people a sense of power which they felt was denied under the old, aristocratic form of government. They demanded increased participation in their governmental processes, and exalted the virtues of the majority over the limitations of government by the few wealthy, learned, aristocrats heretofore in control.

The man Andrew Jackson gained immense popular appeal precisely because he championed the causes of the ordinary American. As John William Ward has noted:

The symbolic Andrew Jackson is the creation of his time. Through the age's leading figure were projected the age's leading ideas. Of Andrew Jackson the people made a mirror for themselves.

Jackson was in complete accord with the mainstream of America concerning the conflicts and frustrations of the working man against the moneyed, powerful forces seeking to control the nation. Marvin Meyers in The Jacksonian Persuasion points to several areas of importance to a 19th century American: equality against privilege, liberty against domination, honest work against idle exploit, natural dignity against factitious superiority, patriotic conservatism against alien innovation, and progress against dead precedent. These were the important issues of the day and Jackson sided with the working man in each area.

The strength of Jackson lay in his deep feeling and understanding of the people. As Van Buren noted: "They were his blood relations--the only blood relations he had." His background as a famed military man schooled not in formal education but in the everyday experiences of life broadened his appeal to the populace, and thereby lessened the appeal of any one who smacked of formalism, aristocracy, or wealth.

Jackson felt that the laboring classes were to be respected--and highest among them were those who worked the land--"the first and most important occupation of man." Vice, to Jackson, was synonymous with those who sought wealth without labor--employing the stratagems of speculative maneuver, privilege-grabbing and monetary manipulation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion, (Stanford: The



Jackson believed that anyone should have the opportunity to seek and attain public office--that public service should not be limited to the learned and the polished. Jackson felt that official duties could be made "so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance."

To help restore faith in the government, the Jacksonians even viewed the spoils system as a device to show that one man was as good as another, and in a democracy all deserved an equal chance to gain a government position.<sup>9</sup> An unfortunate by-product of this viewpoint was a declining importance of Congress. As Hofstadter notes:

Furious menaces and bellowing exaggeration take the place of calm and dignified debate; the halls of the capital often present scenes which would disgrace a beer-garden; and Congress attains the unenviable fame of being the most helpless, disorderly, and inefficient legislative body which can be found in the civilized world.<sup>10</sup>

Other authors have noted the negative effects of Jacksonian policies upon public office. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. points out that:

The elevation of the backwoodsman Andrew Jackson to the presidency in 1829 was a dramatic symbol of the success of the disintegrating forces of the time. The man of equality and wealth who had dominated the public service for so many years was left with no alternative but to execute as dignified a retreat as possible.<sup>11</sup>

Schlesinger also points out that the seats of government became, for the first time, filled with men whom the people had elected, not because the officials were superior to the multitude, but because they were so like them. The fact that Martin Van Buren

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Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 6.

<sup>9</sup>Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 46, and Ekirch, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>10</sup>Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism In American Life, (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 166.

<sup>11</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., New Viewpoints In American History, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 88.

used goldware and had installed a billard table in the White House was a serious campaign issue in 1840, and the object of every astute candidate was to convince the voters that he was only a plain and democratic citizen.<sup>12</sup>

Daniel Webster carried this to the extreme when he apologized publicly because he had not been born in a log-cabin, but quickly claimed that distinction for his elder brothers and sisters. As he stated:

If ever I am ashamed of it may my name and the name of my posterity be blotted from the memory of mankind.<sup>13</sup>

It is significant that during this period all class distinctions in matters of dress disappeared. All men began to wear the homely garb and short-cropped hair that heretofore had been the distinguishing mark of servants and day-laborers in colonial times. Again Schlesinger noted:

Thus, by the middle of the 19th century the well-born in America had lost their proprietorship of the government, they had in large degree lost their monopoly of education, and finally, they had even lost their clothes.<sup>14</sup>

The Jacksonian belief in the basic equality of men combined with the rapid achievements in science and technology fostered a spirit of progress in the minds of most Americans. The exaltation of the working man prompted an intense importance of the practical. Every aspect of living was measured by its utility, its practical application to day to day living, specifically, the quest for material gain and monetary wealth.

Jackson asserted that each man had the potential to unlimited achievement, that he could aspire to be and to have whatever he was willing to work for. Success was not simply granted by inherited wealth or social station, it was to be earned through diligent, honest, manual labor.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.    <sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-89.    <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 92.



Alexis de Tocqueville, a young French aristocrat visiting America in the 1830's, wrote Democracy in America, which is considered by most authorities the most comprehensive and objective account of America from a foreign viewpoint. Tocqueville observed precisely what many Americans already believed, that: "Nature herself favors the cause of the people"--that the abundance of natural endowment perpetuates the democratic state of nature--by promising fabulous rewards to brave spirits--brave economic spirits excited by material rewards which loom so large in the city of equality.<sup>15</sup>

Tocqueville was not the only author to note the importance of material gain to the American people. Other observers remarked that Americans were not the victims, but the makers of their fate. Fabulous growth and change were seen as the product of vast human energies devoted to work with an intensity. The tempo and direction of this nation's economic development were general expressions of the goals and styles of citizens at work.

"Business is the very soul of an American; he pursues it, not as a means of procuring for himself and his family the necessary comforts of life, but as the fountain of all human felicity."

Likewise, James Hall noted:

The use of money. . .controls and regulates everything. Their work furiously for gain. . .meant getting the means for satisfying wants not yet named."<sup>16</sup>

Utility was the yardstick by which all areas of living were measured. There was no time for idle speculation or arm-chair theories concerning metaphysical possibilities. Each man had the innate ability to succeed, indeed, many believed a divinely inspired obligation to acquire as much as possible as quickly as possible. Every avenue of life was channeled toward progress and gain, whether it be science, education, religion, or business.

The Beards in the Rise of American Civilization called attention to the relationship between scientific progress and the rise of

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<sup>15</sup>Meyers, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

democracy in the United States when they noted that:

Science pointed the way to progressive democracy in its warfare against starvation, poverty, disease, and ignorance, indicating how classes. . . might unite to wring from nature the secret of security and the good life. It was science, not paper declarations relating to the idea of progress, that at last made patent the practical methods by which democracy could raise the standard of living.<sup>17</sup>

The theorist had no place in society. It was the inventor of useful, practical machinery who earned the appreciation of his fellow man.<sup>18</sup>

Education likewise was geared to the practical. Fenimore Cooper noted that the same bent toward utility appeared in the system of higher education and professional training. The colleges are not organized to turn out professional scholars; instead they administer a light dose of general and diversified knowledge to their students, and return them to the countryside to mingle in its active employments.

Space and natural abundance, thought Cooper, offer liberal resources, and in their undeveloped state, strong incentives to action. A society with no past, no follies, no manners, no legends wants little diversion from its matter-of-fact material tasks. A modest portion of intelligence, distributed through the nation, becomes a floating fund of informed common sense for the mastery of practical problems. A diversified education, largely the produce of wordly experience, enlarges the fund, sharpens its equality, and directs it still more surely towards questions of utility.<sup>19</sup>

The religious developments of this period likewise reflected man's relentless pursuit of the practical. Edward Pessen in his Jacksonian America, indicates that Tocqueville was not impressed with the spirit of religious tolerance in this country. As Tocqueville noted:

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<sup>17</sup>Ekirch, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

<sup>18</sup>Meyers, op. cit., pp. 47-49.      <sup>19</sup>Ibid.



It would seem as if the head far more than the heart brought them to the foot of the altar. . . . It is often difficult to ascertain from their discourses whether the principal object of religion is to procure eternal felicity in the other world or prosperity in this.

Pessen thought that American ministers, even if unwittingly, preached not the glory of heaven but religious utility in enriching or making more tranquil the earth. According to many, the actual religion of the country was the pursuit of the dollar.

Pessen's remarks concerning one of the most renowned evangelists of the period, Charles Grandison Finney, suggest that the victory of evangelism was achieved not by the merits of its argument but by the practical success of its methods. Inviting his learned critics to go to hell, Finney answered them not with rational argument but by a head count. His success in conversion, he said, was the surest sign of his rightness.

Like the people, revivalism was intensely pragmatic and somewhat materialistic. Its goal was converts and the maintenance of a "steady rate of church growth." One of its tests for the genuineness of conversion was the willingness of the convert to give money to the church.

Revivalism remained anti-intellectual. It scorned complex theology because its ideas were incomprehensible to the common man. Revivalism was intolerant, it was shrewd. . . .above all it was democratic. Evangelism brought religion to the people in language they could understand. It took religion out of the hands of a trained and conservative clergy, and stressed the significance of the individual.<sup>20</sup>

Americans wholeheartedly devoted themselves to work, to progress, to material prosperity. Science, technology, education, politics, and even religion reflected man's obsession with work. Again Schlesinger

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<sup>20</sup>Edward Pessen, Jacksonian America, (Homewood: The Dorsey Press, 1969), pp. 76-78.

pointed out that:

Americans committed their energies, their concern—their lives to work. They are unlearned to play, to reflect, to rest; to detach themselves in any important way from the urgent business of the day. And all their purposes were immediately focused on one subject: the "almight dollar."

More than one author has recorded the detrimental effects of such a concentration of efforts towards the single end of material success. Francis Lieber saw "a striving and driving onward," a "diseased anxiety to be equal to the wealthiest, the craving for wealth and consequent disappointment, which ruins the intellect of many and contributes to an appalling frequency of alienation of the mind in America."<sup>21</sup>

In January, 1845, The American Review published an article entitled "Influence of the Trading Spirit Upon the Social and Moral Life of America." It examined the results of America's pursuit of wealth, and its conclusions merit some detail.

Foreign observers of our nation have noted the excessive anxiety written in the American expression. It is not poverty, nor tyranny, not over-competition which produces this anxiety. . . . It is the concentration of the faculties upon an object, which in its very nature is unattainable—the perpetual improvement of the outward condition. There are no bounds among us to the restless desire to be better off; no man in America is contented to be poor. . . . There are here no established limits within which the hopes of any class of society must be confined, as in other countries.

We call our country a happy country; it continues, happy, indeed, in being the home of noble political institutions, the abode of freedom; but very far from being happy in possessing a cheerful, light-hearted, and joyous people. . . . If ever the curse of labor was upon the race, it is upon us; nor is it simply now "by the sweat of thy brow thou shalt earn thy bread." Labor for a livelihood is dignified. But we labor for bread, and labor for pride, and labor for pleasure. A man's life with us does consist of the abundance of the things which he possesseth. To get, and to have the reputation of possessing, is the ruling passion. To it are bent

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<sup>21</sup>Meyers, op. cit., pp. 95-96.



all the energies of nine-tenths of our population. Is it that our people are so much more miserly and earth born than any other? No, not by any constitutional baseness; but circumstances have necessarily given this direction to the American mind. In the hard soil of our common mother, New England--the poverty of our ancestors--their early thrift and industry--the want of other distinctions than those of property--the frown of the Puritans upon all pleasures; these circumstances combined, directed our energies from the first into the single channel of trade. . . Honor belongs to our fathers, who in times of great necessity met the demand for a most painful industry with such manly and unflinching hearts. But what was their hard necessity we are perpetuating as our willing servitude? What they bore as evil we seek as good.

The excessive pursuit of gain begets a secrecy of thought, a contradiction of ideas, a barrenness of interests, which renders its votary any thing but social or companionable.

It is rare to see a foreigner without some taste for amusement, some power of relaxing his mind, some interest in the arts, or in literature. This is true even of the less privileged classes. It is rare, on the contrary, to find a virtuous American past middle life, who does not regard amusements of all sorts either as childish or immoral; who possesses any acquaintance with or taste for the arts, . . . or who reads anything except newspapers, and only the political or commercial columns of those. It is the want of tastes for other things than business which gives an anxious and unhappy turn to our minds.<sup>22</sup>

The evolution of this nation as one which labors first for bread, then for pride, and finally for pleasure is made clear. Labor to our forefathers was necessary; settlement in the new world necessitated constant toil simply to survive the hardships imposed upon them.

As more immigrants settled this land and were given the opportunity to advance their station in life, they developed a certain pride in labor. These people had the fortune to settle a land that afforded them the opportunity to better themselves

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<sup>22</sup>"Influence of the Trading Spirit Upon the Social and Moral Life of America," *The American Review*, I, January 1845, pp. 95-98. cited by Miller, op. cit., pp. 70-74.

materially, something unknown in nations bound by a strict caste system. It was a unique opportunity open only to the American people.

Finally Americans labored for pleasure. Boundless natural resources, the recollection of the poverty of our ancestors, an undaunted belief in the Puritan work-ethic, and finally the declaration of the eminence of the average laborer and his values carried Americans to the stage that:

To get, and to have the reputation of possessing,  
is the ruling passion.

The consequences of this worship of the material is profound for the intellectual, the wealthy aristocrat and the philosopher. A nation so devoted to labor and the pursuit of wealth had no time or inclination for an intellectual. The average man was intensely set towards the betterment of his outward, physical condition, and had no time for philosophical, metaphysical, or theoretical indulgences. These areas simply had no place in the life of a people caught up by the practical, pragmatic, and utilitarian measurements of the world.

Least respected were those of inherited wealth, with idle time which could be spent on irrelevant matters. These people, for the most part, possessed no driving ambition toward more and more material gains; rather much of their time was spent in study, in speculation, and in relaxation. This seemed alien to those Americans caught up in physical labor, seeking constantly to obtain increased wealth. Americans read primarily those things which had practical application to their lives, they supported scientific research when it dealt with a more practical solution to ordinary living, and they embraced the inventor when he succeeded in perfecting a tool or implement to aid them in their work, thereby enhancing their ability to make more money.

The primacy of the practical, pragmatic forces in America likewise effectively stifled any appreciable growth of the arts, literature, and philosophy. This lack of appreciation stems in part from a pervasive rejection of our European heritage. Little need was felt to draw upon centuries of culture and ideology. As Hofstadter remarks:



. . . it had been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies but to be one. As European antagonisms withered and lost their meaning on American soil in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the new nation came to be conceived not as sharing the ideologies which had grown out of these antagonisms but as offering an alternative to them, as demonstrating that a gift for compromise and plain dealing, a preference for hard work and common sense, were better and more practical than commitments to broad and divisive abstractions. . . Americans continued to congratulate themselves on their ability to get on without the benefit of what are commonly called "Foreign isms," just as they had always congratulated themselves on their ability to steer clear of European "corruption" and "decadence."

In headlong rebellion against the European past, Americans thought of "decadent" Europe as more barbarous than "natural" America; they feared that their own advancing civilization was "artificial" and might estrange them from Nature.<sup>23</sup>

Americans had always fostered the belief that our nation was peculiar in its mission to mankind. In the evolution from Winthrop's "Citty on A Hill," to the Jacksonian theme of progress, to Manifest Destiny, America felt little need to consult or consort with any outside influences. This autonomous attitude, coupled with an abundance of natural resources and the opportunity of every man to aspire to whatever he would, created a distaste for what Hofstadter terms "Foreign isms." "Natural" America felt no need for or appreciation of Old World art, literature, music, or philosophy to any extent.

It is not coincidence, therefore, that when this country did formulate a formal school of philosophical thought, it centered around Pragmatism. American Pragmatism coincided with precisely that which was important to Americans.

The Western Goth, so fiercely practical, so keen of eye has at last gotten himself a philosophy. It is pragmatism, the philosophy of practicality, the gospel of energy, whose prime criterion is success. It has been called a business philosophy which demands results; a bread-and-butter view of life which aims at consequences. In short, pragmatism furnishes

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<sup>23</sup> Hofstadter, op. cit., pp. 43, 158.

a sort of speculative clearing-house which says that a philosophic theory must have cash value and be true if it works, and false if it fails. Pragmatism is not a metaphysical system, but a method of testing systems. Each one applies the test for himself and chooses that which best suits his own particular case.<sup>24</sup>

The learned, the aristocrat, the artist thus suffered during the Jacksonian era in the development of religion, politics, business and education. Emotion ruled the hearts of most Americans, fostering the evangelical notion that tangible results were the key to religious success, rather than complex theological reasoning, and continuing the preference for a minister "called" to the faith over a formally schooled religious teacher.

The Jacksonian notion that any man could serve his country as well as one experienced and schooled in the political arena effectively removed the specialist in politics, and promoted the spoils system. Education was geared to the teaching of that which could be practically applied in ordinary life, at the expense of classical studies or specialized training.

Finally in business, men such as Tocqueville saw that the life of constant action and decision which was created by the democratic and businesslike character of American life put a premium upon rough and ready habits of mind, quick decision, and the prompt seizure of opportunities--and that all this activity was not propitious for deliberation, elaboration or precision in thought.<sup>25</sup> Hofstadter aptly summarizes the Jacksonian period:

What we loosely call Jacksonian democracy completed the disestablishment of a patrician leadership that had been losing its grip for some time. At an early date, literature and learning were stigmatized as the prerogative of useless aristocracies. . . . It seemed to be the goal of the common

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<sup>24</sup>Woodbridge Riley, American Thought, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. 279.

<sup>25</sup>Hofstadter, op. cit., pp. 49-50.



man in America to build a society that would show how much could be done without literature and learning--or rather, a society whose literature and learning would be largely limited to such elementary things as the common man could grasp and use.<sup>26</sup>

The Jacksonian era marked a significant stage of our nation's development with respect to the role of the intellectual. Subsequent developments saw the intellectual as a specialist, sought after yet nonetheless feared and criticized. Business was firmly entrenched as the cornerstone of American life, as an examination of the latter half of the nineteenth century to the present will reflect.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid. pp. 50-51.

## POST CIVIL-WAR INFLUENCES OF BUSINESS AND EDUCATION

The prominence of the common man coupled with rapid advancements in technology, science, and economics since the mid 18th century has solidified those tenets of American life that evolved during the first one hundred years of this nation's history. America had a passion for personal wealth; therefore, it is only natural that our nation experienced a remarkable growth of business interests following the Civil War.

Business became the strongest driving force in America, permeating all aspects of life. Scientific and technological breakthroughs afforded Americans easier, more convenient methods of doing those chores once done manually. When Calvin Coolidge stated in a 1923 address to a meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors that "the business of America is business," he succinctly characterized our nation.

The long years of struggle to our Western boundaries were complete, mass transit made travel and communication much more convenient, and this nation's people began to realize a less physically demanding way of life.

As business increasingly dominated American life, its principles became an end unto themselves. Businessmen felt less need to justify their existence or actions outside the realm of business. The Puritans had sanctioned vigorous business pursuit with the claim of serving God; indeed, there was a direct correlation between religious position and business success. Businessmen later viewed themselves as contributing to the character and culture of America. Finally, business turned purely toward the material for its justification--the wealth it produced, and the corresponding rise in this country's standard of living. As Charles Elliott Perkins noted in 1888:

History and experience demonstrate that as wealth has accumulated and things have cheapened, men have improved. . . in their habits of thought, their sympathy for others, their ideas of justice as well as of



mercy. . . Material progress must come first and. . . upon it is founded all other progress.<sup>1</sup>

An outgrowth of business domination was the American characterization of a self-made man. Resounding the Jacksonian belief that every man should and does have the opportunity to be whatever he desires, regardless of wealth or social station, the self-made man attained business success without the benefits of formal education or social breeding.

Proponents of this theory even expressed the notion that poverty in early life was actually an asset, because it fostered the resources of the will--hard work, frugality, perseverance and sobriety. One can almost picture again Daniel Webster and his public apology for not having been born in a log cabin.

As American business gained strength, so did the belief in that which was practical. Technology demanded "know-how," and the past was viewed as impractical and uninventive. Americans continued to look with disdain upon the past as that which was merely to be overcome. Andrew Carnegie's remarks were not atypical when he spoke of "an ignorant past whose chief providence is to teach us not what to adopt, but what to avoid," or Henry Ford who noted that "history is more or less bunk. It's tradition."<sup>2</sup>

Education likewise assumed an aura of practicality, in that classical, liberal arts studies were minimized in favor of more vocational training. Businessmen had little use for those studies of Greek and Shakespeare, rather they stressed the practical application of educational efforts to the common sense affairs of daily life.

The American system of mass public education was not an outgrowth of concern for the development of the mind or a genuine desire for learning and culture per se--but rather an outgrowth of our form of

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism In American Life, (New York: Random House, 1963), pp. 251-252.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 238, 241.

popular government. Education leaders from Horace Mann forward have felt the necessity to clothe educational reform in utility and practical application to life to gain the public and financial support of business leaders who consistently held the purse strings upon which they depended. Public concern in regard to education was with teaching in areas which would have a direct correlation with ordinary life. Areas such as music and fine arts, therefore, suffered the consequences of this utilitarian based education. Studies of art, music and culture often brought outcries that these pursuits were not useful in America, that they belonged in the societies of decadent Europe. A widely accepted geography even boasted:

While many other nations are wasting the brilliant efforts of genius in monuments of ingenious folly, to perpetuate their pride, the Americans, according to the true spirit of republicanism, are employed almost entirely in works of public and private utility.

Textbooks often emphasized the humble backgrounds and hardships of our national heroes, without giving equal credit to the intellectual achievements of these men. The character of the man and his material wealth was given recognition, but not his intellectual ability. This is aptly summarized in a 1959 study of American schoolbooks, in which the author concludes.

The concept of culture presented in his readers had prepared him for "a life devoted to the pursuit of material success and a perfected character, but a life in which intellectual and artistic achievements would seem important only when they could be made to subserve some useful purpose."

Likewise, Hofstadter notes that:

the function of education in inculcating usable skills and in broadening social opportunities was always clear. The value of developing the mind for intellectual or imaginative achievement or even contemplative enjoyment was considerably less clear and less subject to common agreement.<sup>3</sup>

Our educational system has shown its uniqueness of priorities in yet another fashion--the status of its teachers. Long seen as public

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 305-309.



servants, teachers from colonial times to present have faced a multiplicity of obstacles peculiar to their profession. Low pay, the lack of status, class discipline and an uncooperative public are only a few of many problems teachers in this country have had to cope with.

Educators in other countries have long enjoyed a social rank and material compensation unknown to the great majority of their American counterparts. This country has always placed great demands upon the public and private lives of its teachers, yet has been unwilling to acknowledge or reward the profession in a way commensurate with the expectations placed upon them. Teachers have been, and are still, expected to maintain lives above reproach both in the classroom, as well as privately. It is perfectly acceptable to find men and women in any other profession enjoying a social drink, and yet teachers are chastised for the same thing, lest one of their classroom charges happen to see them in such an act.

Our educational systems demand that members of the teaching profession continually upgrade their own educations, yet they remain in pay scales far below what is earned in other fields of endeavor, with a comparable level of educational background and experience. Many teachers are forced to take on summer employment simply to provide a low middle-class standard of living.

The school budget always seems to be the first and hardest hit when public resistance to increased spending arises, yet we demand that the education system serve as surrogate parents and provide a healthy, wholesome and rich environment for the child.

The problems faced by educators are not peculiar to twentieth century America, they are rooted in our heritage. Americans of the eighteenth and nineteenth century sought out teachers from the ranks of misfits, women, and others deemed unable to perform any other type occupation, and the material compensation to these people reflected the worth and social position assigned to them by the public. The cliché that "those who can, do--all others only teach" offers a valuable insight into the popular opinion of the teaching profession.

Although advances have been made in recent years towards problem areas, many others remain, due primarily to beliefs indigenous

to America. Education is still looked upon as a feminine endeavor, to be sought after primarily by those of inherited wealth and leisure enough to pursue it. We look to education to provide the rudiments of everyday living, not to open avenues of pure intellectual enjoyment. America is still material oriented, and education is simply to be a vehicle to the achievement of greater wealth.

The extent of dissatisfaction among teachers is reflected in a recent survey taken by the National Education Association, which represents nearly 1,800,000 classroom teachers. When asked if they would again choose a teaching career, given the opportunity, fewer than 40% responded with a definite yes, while nearly 20% said they probably or certainly would not.<sup>4</sup>

Much of the fault of this country's education system can be traced to the disdain for learning and culture fostered by our forefathers. The difficulties faced in today's classrooms are in many instances only a culmination of years of bias and neglect of the educational process. The neglect is due in part to the speed and haste to settle this nation, yet it is also due to a basic lack of appreciation for learning, or more specifically, the lack of appreciation in intelligence above the scope of ordinary, utilitarian desires.

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<sup>4</sup>William Cowper, "Why Teachers are Unhappy," Changing Times, September, 1979, p. 13.



## CONCLUSION

I have attempted in the preceeding pages to identify at least a portion of the developments which contributed to this nation's pragmatic way of life. We Americans are indeed a unique people, in thought and actions. In only two hundred years we have achieved an unparalleled standard of living, and much of our national pride is founded in the ability and ingenuity of this country to provide for ourselves, without external assistance. The leaders of the American Revolution evidenced this ideal in their struggle for independence from the mother country, and this same strong national will has been displayed in subsequent years.

An important part of this heritage has been the willingness of America to accept other peoples, most often the outcasts, the poor, and the homeless. America is known as the land of opportunity, the one nation on earth where men have the opportunity to provide for themselves.

The first settlers of this land were not chosen because of their social station or their wealth or expertise. They were, in the main, a people who sought refuge from religious persecution or who simply wanted the opportunity to escape the social and economic hardships of their homelands. They found a rugged and vast land, but a land which held no religious domination or rigid caste system. The opportunity for betterment in America did exist, but it required of all its inhabitants a willingness to physical labor, and left little time for idle pleasure.

The early Puritans placed a high value on this willingness to work and incorporated manual labor and material prosperity into their strict religious framework. As the nation expanded westward, the ability to work was the very basis of life, for physical endurance and perseverance were the yardsticks by which a man was measured.

Andrew Jackson gave further credence to the importance of work both by his own life as well as his policies while in office. He has

been embodied as perhaps the best example of what America valued, a man of humble descent who, through his own ability and ambition, attained the highest and most noble station of American life. That Jackson succeeded without benefit of a formal upbringing or inherited wealth is significant, because his life served as an inspiration to countless other Americans. Success was possible without a formal education or inherited social position and wealth.

In the last one hundred years of American life, the passion for wealth can be seen most clearly in the realm of business. Today business dwarfs most other concerns of living, it enjoys constant national attention; it is now business developments that serve as the measure of national growth. Business is, however, only the evolutionary offspring of our passion for what once was the Puritan work-ethic. The advent of inventions, technology, corporations and conglomerates provide modern day means to the same end sought by our ancestors--material prosperity and the accumulation of wealth. The desire for material goods and worth is the necessary consequence of American events from our beginning to present.

The position of the intellectual in America then has always been suspect. In a nation that emphasizes the ability and willingness to work, the overwhelming desire for material success, and the practical, utilitarian application of any endeavor in life, the intellectual is out of step with all others. The complete devotion to pure intellectual pursuits is, for the most part, uncomprehensible to the average American, and always has been. Intellectuals in America have been seen as aloof, effeminate and useless, except where their areas of expertise had practical application in day-to-day affairs.

The disregard for material matters oftentimes displayed by intellectuals is alien to the mainstream of American living. The emphasis upon the arts and culture is likened to old world values which has always received criticism in America, where we felt no need for European ties. The disdain for leisurely, intellectual pursuits has been viewed with suspicion by those who had no time or inclination for such matters.

The educational process has likewise suffered from the alienation



of the intellectual. Until most recently, emphasis on the practical aspects in education stifled any appreciable acceptance of the study of culture and the arts. The fear and suspicion aroused by intellectuals even today finds expression in such movements as McCarthyism. Americans find it difficult to accept anyone who does not have a driving ambition towards wealth and accumulation of possessions.

The lack of appreciation of intellectuals is not, however, the result of overt opposition to learning per se--but an unfortunate by-product of our nation's evolution into a people who put a premium on daily living. America is not intentionally an anti-intellectual nation but rather a nation whose founders had little time for such pursuits.

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